

Nationalism and Revolutions

Every nation gets the government it deserves.

—Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821)

Essential Question: What were the causes and effects of the various revolutions in the period from 1750 to 1900, including influences of the Enlightenment and emerging nationalism?

The age of new ideas led to political and philosophical conflicts. Like the English statesman Edmund Burke, the French thinker Joseph de Maistre was a conservative who went against the tide of Enlightenment thinking. In the view of conservative thinkers such as Burke and Maistre, revolutions were bloody, disruptive, and unlikely to yield positive results. However, try as conservatives might to quell revolutionary change, the desire of common people for constitutional government and democratic practices erupted in revolutions throughout the 19th century. And many nations did, indeed, get a new form of government that responded to the new wave of thinking with its key ideals: progress, reason, and natural law.

The American Revolution

The ideals that inspired the American Revolution had their roots in European Enlightenment philosophy. The economic ideas of the physiocrats also played a part in the American Revolution, providing a defense of free market ideas in opposition to English mercantilism. Additionally, the American colonists had become increasingly independent politically. Colonial legislatures were making decisions usually made by Parliament. Moreover, great distances separated the colonists from Parliament and the king in London. With economic and political desires for independence grew a new social spirit.

Declaration of Independence On July 4, 1776, the **Declaration of Independence** expressed the philosophy behind the colonists' fight against British rule. In the document, Thomas Jefferson picked up the phrase "unalienable rights" from John Locke. For Jefferson, these rights were to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In the war that followed, the colonists triumphed in 1783 with crucial help from Britain's long-time enemy, France.

The New Zealand Wars

New Zealand had been occupied by Polynesian people, the Maori, since at least the mid-1200s. In the period between their arrival and the arrival of Europeans the Maori developed a rich culture. The people were divided into individual tribes, or *iwi*, who sometimes engaged in warfare. After colonization by the British, made official by annexation of New Zealand in 1840, English control over Maori affairs increased, as did pressure for their land. These issues resulted in a series of wars between the Maori and British collectively known as the New Zealand Wars. Though the Maori tribes fought together, developing a sense of Maori nationalism, by 1872, the British had won.

The French Revolution

In France in the 1780s, revolutionary ideals took on their own spin, summarized in the slogan **liberté, égalité, et fraternité** (liberty, equality, and fraternity). These ideas, which struck many people as radical, were popularized throughout Europe in the writings of the **philosophes**.

Economic Woes However, additional causes led to the French Revolution. France had long spent more than it was taking in, partly to finance a series of wars. Among this spending was the economic aid that France supplied the Americans in their revolution. To address its financial situation, the French government called a meeting of the Estates-General in spring 1789. Three sectors of society, or estates, made up the Estates-General: the clergy (religious officials), the nobility, and the commoners. However, inequality in voting caused the commoners (who made up 97 percent of French society) to break away and form a new body, the National Assembly.

The Revolution Begins In the early days of the French Revolution, moderates such as Marquis de Lafayette seemed to be on the point of establishing a constitutional monarchy. The National Assembly began meeting in Paris, but then the King threatened to arrest the leaders. Angry crowds rioted in Paris and elsewhere in France. On July 14, 1789, a crowd in Paris stormed the **Bastille**, a former prison that symbolized the abuses of the monarchy and the corrupt aristocracy. In the French countryside, peasants rose up against nobles, even burning some manor houses. Some royal officials fled France. The king was forced to accept a new government with a National Assembly in charge.

The date July 14, 1789, became French Independence Day. The most permanent changes were enacted early in the Revolution—the abolition of feudalism and the adoption of the **Declaration of the Rights of Man**, a statement declaring basic human rights. Louis XVI and the nobility refused to accept the limited monarchy, which led to dissatisfaction among radical groups such as the Jacobins and inspired the establishment of the First French Republic in 1792. The **Reign of Terror**, a period during which the government executed thousands of opponents of the revolution, including the king and queen, sprang from the Jacobins. After a period of turmoil and war, the brilliant general Napoleon Bonaparte became emperor of France in 1804.

The Haitian Revolution

At the end of the 18th century, revolutionary forces were also at work in the rich French sugar and coffee colony of **Haiti** on the western third of the island of St. Domingue, also known as Hispaniola. Enslaved Africans began the rebellion by killing their masters and burning their homes. They were soon joined by **Maroons**, individuals who had already escaped slavery in Haiti. The examples of the recent American and French revolutions led formerly enslaved **Toussaint L'Ouverture** to join the revolts in 1791 and then to lead a general rebellion against slavery. Besides being well-read in Enlightenment thought, L'Ouverture proved to be a capable general. His army of enslaved Africans and Maroons established an independent government and played the French, Spanish, and British against each other.

Haiti In 1801, after taking control of the territory that would become the independent country of Haiti, L'Ouverture produced a constitution that granted equality and citizenship to all residents. He also declared himself governor for life. Haiti next enacted land reform: plantations were divided up, with the lands being distributed among formerly enslaved and free black people.

L'Ouverture worked with the French but they betrayed and imprisoned him. He died in France in 1803. But he had cemented the abolition of slavery in Haiti, which he set on the road to independence from France.

In 1804, L'Ouverture's successor, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, orchestrated a Haitian declaration of permanent independence. Thus, Haiti became the first country in Latin America to win its independence and the first black-led country in the Western Hemisphere. It was also the only country to become permanently independent as a result of a slave uprising.

Comparing the Haitian and French Revolutions Both the Haitian and French revolutions grew out of the Enlightenment's insistence that men had natural rights as citizens, and that legal restraints were limiting the freedom of people by forcing them into various estates (social classes). However, in the case of the Haitians, the restraints were more severe—the rebellion was led by people who had no rights at all.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

Toussaint L'Ouverture

Creole Revolutions in Latin America

On the Latin American mainland, revolutionary ideals were taken up by **creoles**. Born of European ancestry in the Americas, the creoles were well educated and aware of the ideas behind the revolutions in North America and France. They considered themselves superior to the **mestizos**, who were born of European and Indian parents. Colonists who were born in Spain or Portugal, known as **peninsulares**, felt superior to everyone. At the bottom of the social ladder were the enslaved Africans the indigenous population, and **mulattoes**, those of African and either European or indigenous ancestry. (Some of these social distinctions remain today.)

There were many reasons for discontent in the colonies, each of which encouraged some people to desire independence from Spain:

- Many creoles were wealthy owners of estates, mines, or businesses. They opposed Spain's mercantilism, which required colonists to buy manufactured goods only from Spain and sell products only to Spain.
- Creoles wanted more political power. They resented that Spain tended to give important government jobs in the colonies to peninsulares.
- Mestizos wanted political power and a share of the wealth of the colonies. Many had jobs in the towns or worked in the mines or on the estates of the peninsulares and creoles.

The Bolívar Revolutions In many parts of South America, the desire for independence from Spain grew among the creole class. Fearing the masses, the creoles refused the support of mestizos, indigenous people, and mulattos (people of mixed African and European heritage). The creoles had seen the result in Haiti of a slave uprising as well as the excesses of the French Revolution during the Reign of Terror. Some creoles, such as **Simón Bolívar**, continued to push for Enlightenment ideals in Latin America. He promoted independence of areas that became Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru.

Bolívar was born in Venezuela in 1783 to a family whose ancestors had been village aristocrats in Spain. The family had grown very wealthy in Venezuela, and Bolívar had access to this wealth for his revolutionary causes. After considerable military success in Latin America fighting the Spanish, his forces achieved the formation of a large area that he called Gran Colombia. He hoped it would become a federation similar to the United States, one based on Enlightenment ideals. He described himself as a liberal who believed in a free market and the abolition of slavery. Bolívar's goals and concerns for Latin America are outlined in his "Jamaica Letter" (1815): "Generous souls always interest themselves in the fate of a people who strive to recover the rights to which the Creator and Nature have entitled them, and one must be wedded to error and passion not to harbor this noble sentiment."

The new nations of Latin America suffered from the long wars of independence. Armies loyal to their generals led to the rise of the caudillos—strong, local leaders with regional power bases. These men intervened in

national politics to make or break governments. Sometimes the caudillos defended the interests of the regional elites and sometimes of the indigenous population and the peasants, but in general they disregarded representative forms of government and the rule of law.

Results of the Creole Revolutions Although the constitutions of the newly independent countries in Latin America legally ended slavery and some social distinctions, governments were often conservative. The first constitution of Peru, for example, forbade voting by those who could not read or write in Spanish, which effectively denied most indigenous people the vote until the constitution was changed in 1860. The creoles formed powerful and conservative upper class, as they had before the wars of colonial independence.

Women gained little from the revolutions in Latin America. They were still unable to vote or enter into contracts. Most women received little education until late in the nineteenth century, and most remained submissive to men. One notable exception was Manuela Sáenz (1797–1856), who was the lover of Simón Bolívar. She actively participated in fighting alongside Bolívar, for example, in 1822 in a battle near Quito, Ecuador. An excellent rider as well as courageous fighter, she rose to the rank of colonel. On one occasion, she saved Bolívar's life, for which she received the nickname "Liberator of the Liberator." (Connect: In a brief paragraph or outline, trace the connections between creole elites and revolutions in Latin America. See Topic 4.5)

Later Challenges to Spanish Colonialism Spain's grip on parts of its empire lasted throughout the 19th century. In the Caribbean, Puerto Rico and Cuba were among its final colonial holdings. Both islands saw uprisings against Spanish rule beginning in the year 1868.

While many individuals and organizations contributed to the spirit of revolution in Puerto Rico, the role of **Lola Rodríguez de Tió** was unique. A recognized poet during an era of little educational opportunity for women, Rodríguez de Tió became famous for her eloquent critiques of Spain's exploitive rule over Puerto Rico. Her home became a meeting place for political thinkers and revolutionaries. At such meetings, she began to read lyrics to a revolutionary song, "La Boriqueña," which encouraged her fellow Puerto Ricans, "Awake from your sleep, for it's time to fight!"

The 1868 uprising forced Rodríguez de Tió into exile in Venezuela. She was allowed to return in 1885, but her critical writings again ended in exile—this time in Cuba. Once there, she wrote and worked for Cuban independence, earning her exile from there, too, to New York. She returned to Cuba in 1899 and spent her remaining years as a campaigner for social justice there.

Revolt in the Philippines

The Philippines, too, remained a Spanish colony throughout the 19th century. Educational opportunities, even for well-to-do Filipinos, were limited and controlled by religious authorities. As a result, many young men (often creoles and mestizos) from wealthy families traveled to Europe, especially Madrid

and Barcelona, to attend universities. An atmosphere of nationalist fervor and republicanism, inspired by Enlightenment thinking, existed in 1880s Europe, and these Filipino students embraced it.

José Rizal became the most prominent of these young agitators, all of whom contributed to magazines, pamphlets, and other publications advocating for greater autonomy for the Philippines. Called the **Propaganda Movement**, it did not call for revolution or independence. But Spanish authorities viewed its members with suspicion. Rizal's arrest in 1892 and execution in 1896 shocked Filipinos and helped spur the first nationalist movement with the organization and strength to truly challenge Spanish rule. A serious military upheaval, the Philippine Revolution, began in 1896.

Nationalism and Unification in Europe

As nationalism spread beyond Europe, people often created an identity under one government where none had existed before. Nationalism increased in France and in other areas of Europe and in the Americas. More than in the past, people felt a common bond with others who spoke their language, shared their history, and followed their customs. Nationalism thrived in France and beyond its borders in areas conquered by Napoleon, particularly those in the Germanic areas of the declining Holy Roman Empire. Nationalism was a unifying force that not only threatened large empires, but it also drove efforts to unite people who shared a culture into one political state.

Italian Unification Count di Cavour, the prime minister of Piedmont-Sardinia, led the drive to unite the entire **Italian Peninsula** under the only native dynasty, the House of Savoy. At the time, the region was divided among a patchwork of kingdoms and city-states, and most people spoke regional languages rather than Italian. Cavour himself spoke French better than he spoke Italian. Like other classical liberals, he believed in natural rights, progress, and constitutional monarchy. But he also believed in the practical politics of reality, which came to be called **realpolitik**. Thus, he did not hesitate to advance the cause of Italian unity through manipulation. In 1858, he maneuvered Napoleon III of France into a war with Austria, hoping to weaken Austrian influence on the Italian Peninsula. Napoleon III backed out of the war after winning two important battles, partly because he feared the wrath of the Pope, who did not want his Papal States to be controlled by a central Italian government.

Nevertheless, it was too late to stop the revolutionary fervor, and soon several areas voted by plebiscite, or popular referendum, to join Piedmont (the Kingdom of Sardinia). To aid the unification effort, Cavour adopted the radical romantic revolutionary philosophy of **Giuseppe Mazzini**, who had been agitating for Italian resurgence (**Risorgimento**) since early in the nineteenth century. Cavour also allied with the Red Shirts military force led by **Giuseppe Garibaldi**, which was fighting farther south in the Kingdom of Naples.

German Unification In Germany, nationalist movements had already strengthened as a result of opposition to French occupation of German states

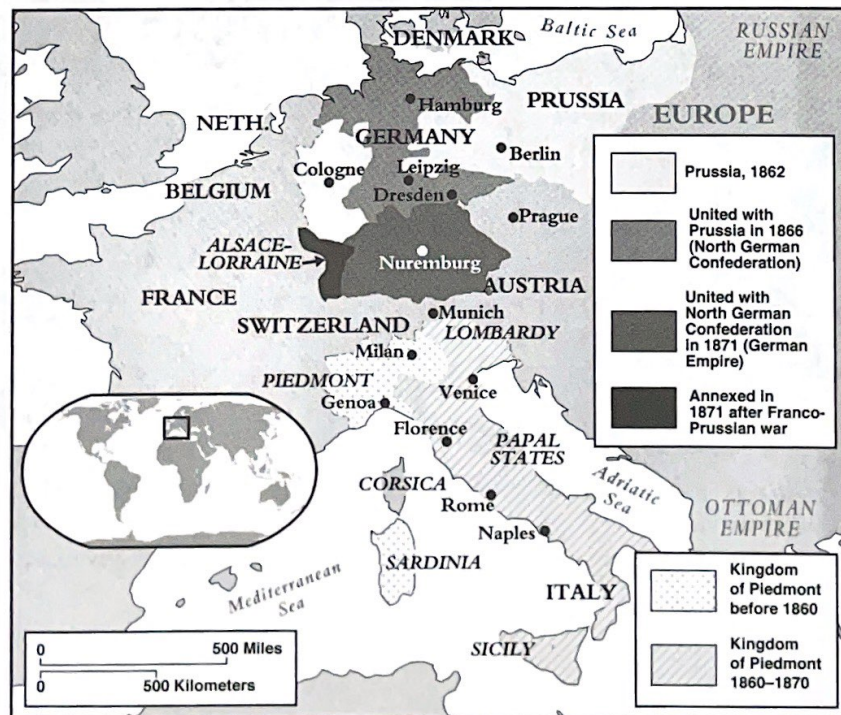
under Napoleon Bonaparte. Following the Congress of Vienna, which settled the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, revolutions occurred in a number of European states, including Prussia and Austria. The revolutions of 1848 were the result of both nationalism (especially a desire for independence) and liberalism (a desire for representation under constitutions that recognized civil liberties).

Prussian leader **Otto von Bismarck**, who like Cavour favored *realpolitik*, used nationalist feelings to engineer three wars to bring about German unification. Bismarck manipulated Austria into participating in two wars, the first with Prussia against Denmark (1864) and the second between Prussia and Austria (Seven Weeks' War of 1866). After winning both wars, Bismarck manipulated France into declaring war against Prussia. His armies beat the French soundly in the Franco-Prussian War (1870). In each of these three wars, Prussia gained territory. In 1871, Bismarck founded the new German Empire, made up of many territories gained from the wars, including Alsace-Lorraine, an area long part of France on the border between France and the new Germany.

Global Consequences By 1871, two new powers, Italy and Germany, were on the international stage in an environment of competing alliances. Balance of power would be achieved briefly through these alliances, but extreme nationalism would lead to World War I.

Unification did not solve all Italian troubles. Poverty in Italy, more in the south than in the north, led to considerable emigration in the late nineteenth century—particularly to the United States and to Argentina, where the constitution of 1853 specifically encouraged **immigration**, the movement of people into the country from other countries.

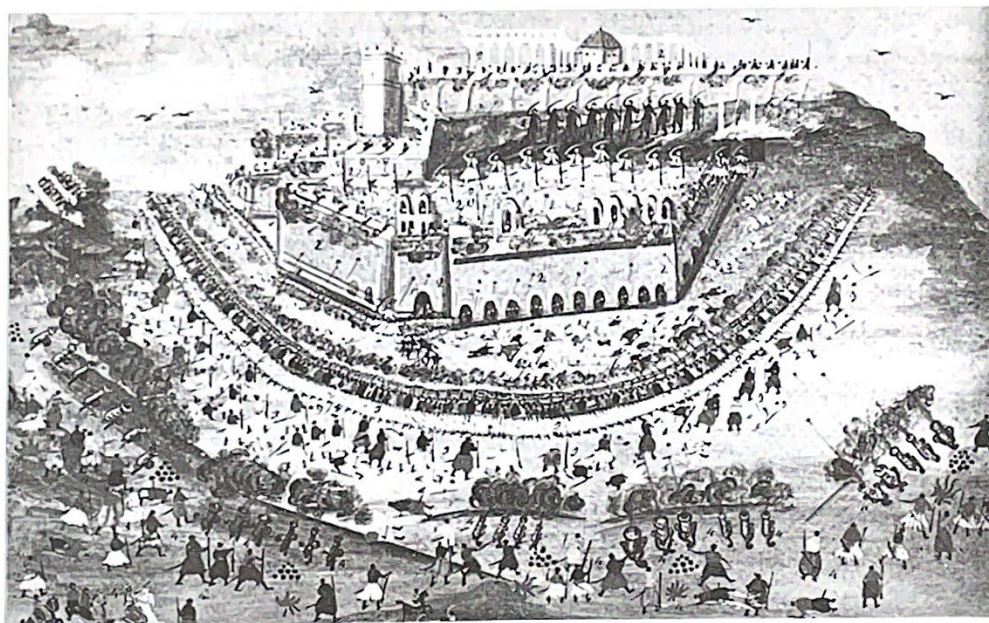
Wars of Unification in Europe



Balkan Nationalism The Ottoman Empire had been the dominant force in southeastern Europe for centuries. But for many reasons, the 17th century saw the beginning of its long, slow decline. A failed attempt to conquer Vienna in 1683 signaled the beginning of successful efforts by Austria and Russia to roll back Ottoman dominance in the Balkans. It was largely due to the increasing involvement and contact with Western European ideas and powers that Balkan nationalism developed.

In Greece, which by 1800 had been under Ottoman control for more than 350 years, increased contact with Western ideas meant exposure to Enlightenment principles. It also meant exposure to the reverence with which Greece and its ancient culture were viewed across Europe. Together, these developments helped reawaken Greek cultural pride and stoke the fires of Greek nationalism. A protracted civil war against Ottoman forces brought some success. However, it took the intervention of a British, French, and Russian fleet, which destroyed an Ottoman fleet in 1827, to help assure Greek independence.

Events in other Balkan regions, such as Serbia, Bulgaria, and Romania, followed a similar, but by no means identical, course. The waning of Ottoman control led to greater freedom and an influx of new ideas, including nationalism. People began to rally around important cultural markers, such as language, folk traditions, shared history, and religion. Later, outside powers, such as Russia or Austria, aided in achieving independence.



Source: Wikimedia Commons

This painting by Panagiotis Zografos shows the Ottoman siege of the Acropolis. Aided by British, French, and Russian forces, the Greeks won their independence by 1832.

Ottoman Nationalism The 1870s and 1880s saw the development in the Ottoman state of **Ottomanism**—a movement that aimed to create a more modern, unified state. Officials sought to do this by minimizing the ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences across the empire. Taking control of local schools and mandating a standard curriculum was a major part of this drive. But the effects of nationalism were not limited to Balkan territories and Ottoman officials. Ethnic and religious groups within the Ottoman Empire had nationalist urges of their own, and they viewed Ottomanism with suspicion. Ironically, this attempt to create a more unified state actually served to highlight and intensify subject people's feelings of difference and promote their desire for independence.

The Future of Nationalism While nationalism continues to shape how people view themselves and their political allegiances, some signs suggest that nationalism might be starting to decline. In Europe, many countries have agreed to use the same currency, to allow people to travel freely across borders, and to coordinate public policies. These changes might reflect a shift away from nationalism and toward a larger political grouping. Like city-states and empires, nations might someday give way to other forms of political organization.

KEY TERMS BY THEME

GOVERNMENT: American Revolution
Declaration of Independence

GOVERNMENT: French Revolution
philosophes
Declaration of the Rights of Man
Reign of Terror

CULTURE: France
liberté, égalité, et fraternité

GOVERNMENT: Haitian Revolution
Haiti
Toussaint L'Ouverture

GOVERNMENT: Bolivar Revolutions
Simón Bolívar

GOVERNMENT: Puerto Rico
Lola Rodríguez de Tió

GOVERNMENT: Philippines
Propaganda Movement

GOVERNMENT: Italian Unification
realpolitik
Giuseppe Mazzini
Risorgimento
Giuseppe Garibaldi

CULTURE: Italy
immigration

GOVERNMENT: German Unification
Otto Von Bismarck

GOVERNMENT: Balkans
Ottomanism

SOCIETY: Classes
Maroons
mestizos
peninsulares
mulattoes

SOCIETY: Europe
Bastille
Italian Peninsula